THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

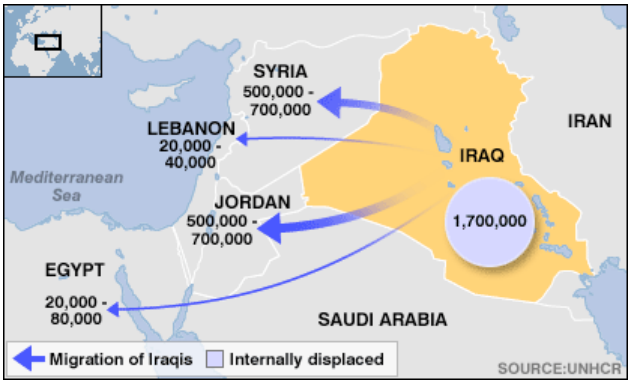
April/May 2014 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Refugees in Their Own Land

by Cathy Breen

Editor's Note: The 1991 Gulf War, a decade of sanctions, the 2002 US invasion, and subsequent occupation took the lives of more than 1.5 million Iraqis and decimated the civilian infrastructure. US support for the a corrupt, Shiite-dominated government formented a Sunni insurrection, which continues to take thousands of lives.

Few Americans have been more faithful in keeping a compassionate focus on the Iraqi people than Cathy Breen, a nurse and member of the Mary House Catholic Worker in New York City. She first travelled to Iraq in 2002 as part of the Iraq Peace team, a project created by the Chicago-based Voices in the Wilderness. Cathy, who lived in Iraq for six months, endured some of the worst days of the US "Shock and Awe" bombing campaign. She later returned for a three-month stay, then began working in Jordan and Syria where hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees had fled. In 2011, Cathy resumed visiting Iraq and has been there three times since. The following account is from her trip in February 2014. It appeared in the March issue of Voices for Creative Nonviolence *and is reprinted here with her permission.*



"We are refugees in our own country!" a soft-spoken Sunni gentleman said this morning at the site where Fallujans are being housed in Karbala. But he was quick to add, "It is better than being refugees outside our country," referring to Syria. I had read in the US alternative media that Karbala, a Shia area, was taking families fleeing the military attacks on their Sunni city, Fallujah. Karbala, a Shia city, is only 90 miles from Fallujah.

Karbala has three large compounds called "Visitors' Cities," each with a capacity to house thousands of pilgrims who come to visit the holy shrine of Imam Hussein and the shrine of his brother Abbas. I was able to visit one of the compounds this morning, which has been home to Fallujans since Iraqi forces began their assault in early January on "terrorists."

At the Visitor City, they are doing everything possible to provide for all the needs of those coming: clothes, food, schools for the children, financial aid, soccer games, medical care, and buses into town. The chief official of the site explained, "We don't want them to feel like refugees. We want them to feel that this is their home. We are all one family. We want to send a message to all the world that there is no difference between Shia and Sunni. ...We are preparing to receive many more people because we believe the fighting will continue."

"[The Fallujans] began coming on January 5th in very small numbers...because

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Prophetic Witness in Detroit

by Gail M. Presbey

Editor's Note: The author is a professor of philosophy at the University of Detroit Mercy, an author, and an advocate for peace and social justice.

As Detroiters suffer from lack of democratic representation by their elected leaders, and the purse strings of their city are still controlled by an un-elected "emergency manager," imposed on the city by the governor, some dedicated activists have prophetically spoken out against the situation. On April 16, 2013, Reverend Bill Wylie-Kellerman, a Methodist pastor of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, and Elena Herrada, an elected Detroit School Board member, disrupted a meeting of the Detroit City Council as an act of purposeful civil disobedience. The council was scheduled to vote that day on a controversial city contract to hire, as financial consultants, Jones Day, a global law firm and former employer of Kevyn Orr, the city's new emergency manager. The firm is being paid $1000/hour as consultants. Estimates suggest that processing the city's bankruptcy will cost Detroit about $100 million, the majority of that money going to Jones Day.

Isn't it a conflict of interest for the emergency manager to hire his former (and possibly future) employer on the city's most lucrative contract? Wylie-Kellerman and Herrada thought so. Since the day of their April 2013 protest, they have only become more concerned with

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52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610 Telephone: (508) 753-3588, 753-3089
Email:theresecw2@gmail.com

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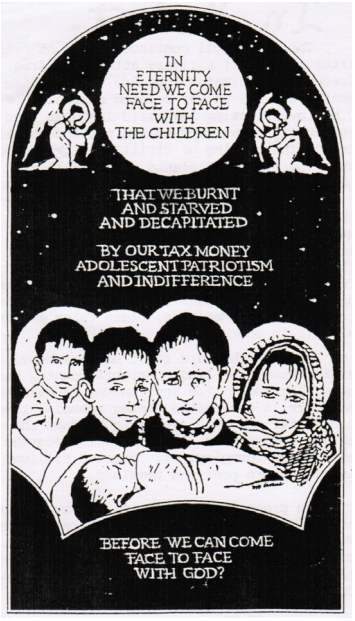
Refugees

(Continued from Page 1)

they were fearful. When they saw that they were safe and treated like brothers, they sent word to their families. On January 7th, they began to arrive in greater numbers." Now, less than a month later, there are between 1,000 and 2,000 in this compound, and they are still coming.

It has been said that the way we learn history shapes how we think about the present and the future. I was very mindful today speaking with one of the refugees from Fallujah of the destruction my country wrought on theirs, especially the two massive attacks we carried out on Fallujah in April and November of 2004, Before leaving, I felt the need to at least acknowledge these shameful acts.


IN ETERNITY NEED WE COME FACE TO FACE WITH THE CHILDREN
THAT WE BURNT AND STARVED AND DECAPITATED
BY OUR TAX MONEY ADOLESCENT PATRIOTISM AND INDIFFERENCE
BEFORE WE CAN COME FACE TO FACE WITH GOD?

Mary Beth Owens

A refugee from Fallujah has strong words for us this morning. "The American forces destroyed our country and the relationships between us.... I have a son who is thirty-two years old. He has only known war."

The TV news is on as I write—live footage from bombs in Baghdad today at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as an area where a dear friend of ours lives. The family from Baghdad who visited me yesterday in Karbala was able to take two packages to friends in Baghdad. One was for the friend living near the bombing. I just got an email from him that he was able to retrieve the package today and deliver the other package. The last part of the email leaves me shaken to my core. I have made a few minor adjustments for easier reading and I have also changed the names

"Everybody happy with the lovely contents of the envelope. You don't know how Zayneb [5 year old daughter] felt happy to get photo of Sofia [also five-year-old from the States] and her family. She will soon draw picture, and as we cannot send it to them, so I will take picture and attach it to email. I went to Ali with the second envelope. He was very happy to get your letter, and he appreciate your effort. He invite me to have tea but I apologize to him because situation wasn't stable in Baghdad today. Just two hours ago, two car bombs were bombed in [area where he lives], around 24 person were killed and injured. We don't know what the reaction of this bomb will be. These car bombs were in front of Sunni houses, victims mainly were kids who were playing in front of their houses. Anyway Cathy, keep in touch and take care.'

Here, joy and suffering exist side by side. Inseparable. Ω

Detroit

(Continued from Page 1)

how the Emergency management is going to shield the banks that made predatory mortgage loans and lend more of Detroit's money to rich investors (to build a hockey stadium, for example), while the poorest and most vulnerable may be forced to move as city services abandon their neighborhood.

Wylie-Kellerman sees Detroit's current problems within a Biblical perspective. He also turns to his faith for models of how to respond to the rapacious injustice of the banks colluding with state power. He notes, "In ancient Israel and in the time of Jesus, debt bondage was the path to slavery. Peter's vision, like that of the Jubilee kindom, involved release of debts and an end to interest lending—foundational for a new society in the shell of the old. Jesus took the jubilee movement straight to the Temple—which was the bank of his day. Run by Sadducees, the absentee landlords, the pro-Roman 1%, it was the place where the 'records of indebtedness' (think mortgages) were kept, as Galilean peasants lost their farms to predatory taxes and interest. He takes the Passover march and direct action straight to the currency exchange, the money changing tables which represent the intersection of the local and imperial economies. He drives them out and occupies the temple court for a day, beginning to teach. When the disciples look up and see the beautiful stones, Jesus notices not only the rich, but the poor widow putting 'all she has to live on' into the Temple treasury. 'It's all coming down, 'says He."

Wylie-Kellerman and Herrada had a court date of January 27, 2014 and planned to defend themselves, explaining why they attempted to block the city council's collusion with emergency manager deals. Retired Councilwoman JoAnn Watson was prepared to give her eyewitness testimony of the protesters' actions in the context of the council's deliberations. But the charges were dropped. Wylie-Kellerman said with some frustration, that his trial, "coincided ironically with the

(Continued on Page 5)

A CATHOLIC WORKER ORIGINAL SERIES

HOUSE of CARDinalS

April 1, 2014

I SUPPORTED HIS ELECTION, BUT HE DIDN'T ADVANCE ME. I'LL DESTROY HIS AGENDA! MALA HERBA CITO CRESCIT *

* "Weeds grow fast."

TO SCUTTLE FRANCIS' REFORMS, I'LL NEED A MEDIA MOUTHPIECE TO TWIST THE TAILS OF THE PRO-CAPITALIST, ANTI-ECUMENICAL CROWD.

MMM... THAT WILL REQUIRE BOUNDLESS AMBITION AND A COMPLETE LACK OF ETHICS.... I'LL BE HAPPY TO DO IT.

LOOK WHAT FRANCIS IS DOING TO THE CHURCH!

THEY'LL POUR OUT OF THE PEWS,

WHILE I STAY CALM, ABOVE THE FRAY, EVEN POSING AS A PIOUS AND LOYAL DEFENDER OF FRANCIS.

I DON'T THINK ANYONE WILL HAVE TO BE MURDERED.

OF COURSE, A GOOD DEAL OF MONEY WILL HAVE TO BE SPREAD AROUND.

Pat Marrin

AND YET, THIS POPE STILL MIGHT PREVAIL BECAUSE...

OF THE INCORRUPTIBLE POWER BEHIND HIM.

Praying With Dorothy Day

reviewed by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

15 Days of Prayer With Dorothy Day by Michael Boover/New City Press, 2014.

It's marathon season here on Mason Street. Come April 21st, I will join Scott and attempt to run the 26.2 miles from Hopkinton to Boston. We plan to race in shirts inscribed with a peace dove and Dorothy Day's words, "Love is the only solution." It's a small gesture on our part to affirm the resilience of nonviolence in the aftermath of last year's bombing.

To prepare for this endeavor, I have consulted a training manual, sought advice from veterans of the Boston race, and followed, more or less, a running regimen for beginning marathoners. Long runs of fourteen miles or more are now part of my weekly discipline. I am learning about injury prevention, building-up endurance, expanding one's aerobic base, and the importance of hydration while slogging through the miles. Marathon training is more elaborate than you might imagine!

But what about training manuals in holiness, guides to aid us in our life-long run with and to God? Michael Boover gives us one in **15 Days of Prayer with Dorothy Day**, a quietly compelling book that presents Day as a vital guide for the journey of loving God and others.

History professor David O'Brien once described Dorothy Day as "the most influential, interesting, and significant figure in the history of American Catholicism." A journalist and political radical, she, along with French itinerant laborer and philosopher, Peter Maurin, co-founded the Catholic Worker movement in 1933. Her life example inspired many including Michael, a Catholic Worker scholar and dear friend whose association with the movement dates back to 1972 when he helped co-found the Mustard Seed community here in Worcester.

This book, one in a series featuring the religious wisdom of various holy souls, is simply organized. A brief but finely written biography and introduction precede fifteen sections or "days,"each one focusing on a turning point in Dorothy's spiritual life, which Michael discusses. A congenial forward gives advice on how to pray with the text. Six questions for reflection conclude each chapter.

Within this modest format are astute assessments of the Catholic Worker's social vision as well as insightful observations on the transformative power of prayer. Dorothy was a prayerful activist, a politically-conscious mystic who wrote

Robert McGovern

often about the "primacy of the spiritual" but strove to meet people's actual needs in concrete, practical ways. Like her, Michael writes with the perspective of one who sees Christ afoot in the social and political struggles of the day, as well as in the workings of the individual heart.

Dorothy offers an abundance of rich material for mining the life of faith. Her written work of many years—seven books, 350 articles, and more than 1,000 columns for *The Catholic Worker* newspaper—include some of the finest American spiritual writing of the twentieth century. She was a communicative believer, willing to reveal her struggles and to talk about God. It was this willingness to speak that makes her so accessible to many.

Yet Michael also emphasizes the particular relevance of the woman who would become "a living example of Catholic social teaching taken seriously in the American context." For American Catholics, Dorothy is our native guide, able to help us find our bearings—a way to articulate the universal mercy of Christ—amid a Church mired in nationalism and a country wedded to the works of war. During World War II, she paid mightily for her principled pacifism, her trust in Christ's call to enemy love. Many Catholic Worker houses closed as young volunteers went off to fight in the "good war." During the forced downsizing, she turned ever deeper to prayer. Such rootedness, Michael writes, helped her "to stand firm on the question of peace" and to "deny with moral clarity and authority of a Hebrew prophet the sin of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the sheer evil of Jim Crow, and the immorality of the Indochina war."

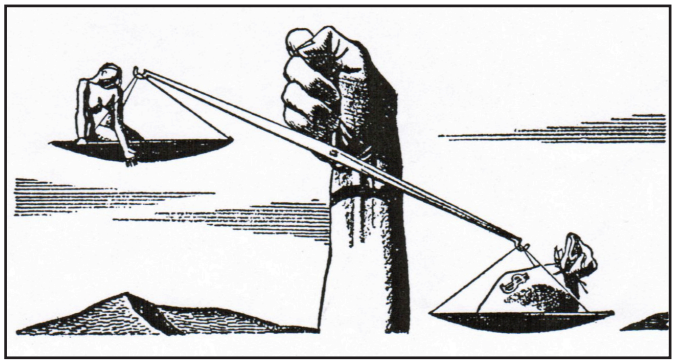
Slow learners, like myself, will find encouragement here. Michael's account of Dorothy's incremental spiritual progress reminds us that no conversion is ever complete. We advance toward God in fits and starts, through cycles and seasons. "Seeing this dynamic of plodding, often painful growth and gradual transformation in another's life, makes us understand and appreciate it in our own," he writes.

Tender in tone, this slim manual on holiness does not downplay the rigors of the spiritual life. As Michael notes, "It is demanding to cooperate with God's ways, listen for cues in prayer, and do God's will over a lifetime, but that is what it takes to be blessed." Some of his reflection questions are quite pointed. "How has self-criticism helped you?" he asks at the conclusion of a discussion on the spiritual benefits of honest self-critique. His chapter "Hope and Poverty" offers one of the most insightful reflections on poverty's confounding virtue and its exacting abundance. Should we quake at the demands of the way of holiness, this book reminds us to seek the spiritual friendship of Dorothy. The path she charts inevitably takes us through earthly love to Eternal Love. Ω

Prophetic Witness in Detroit

(Continued from Page 2)

50th anniversary of Dr. King's *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Charges were dismissed by Judge Kenneth King. To be honest, I'm disappointed we didn't get a chance to put before a jury our justification for that outburst of truth telling."



Rockwell Kent

Wylie-Kellerman still has his impetus to speak truth to power. He has been attending the court proceedings related to the bankruptcy and mentions only about a dozen members of the general public are there with any regularity—retired city employees, folks who work for the water department, for example. In early January, the court was discussing whether they should borrow $350 million from Barclays bank to pay off Bank of America (a client of Jones Day), which was charging a higher interest rate. Kevyn Orr was on the witness stand with his bodyguard. The judge had just told Jones Day that they didn't have to release more documents. Wylie-Kellerman said he hadn't planned on speaking out, but that he was open to the Holy Spirit if it would move him to speak. That day, it did. Irked by the way in which the judge referred repeatedly to Jones Day as "the city,' the Methodist minister stood up and shouted, "Jones Day is not the City of Detroit, and neither is Kevyn Orr." The judge fled the courtroom, and Wylie-Kellerman was escorted out. That particular day, he was not arrested.

Speaking to a large audience at Marygrove College on February 25, 2014, Wylie-Kellerman highlighted continued dissatisfaction with the bankruptcy proposal presented to the public the week before. Kevyn Orr's "structural adjustment plan" for the City calls for half a billion dollars for blight removal. But the Blight Authority is funded and run by corporate interests. Wylie-Kellerman also took to task non-profit organizations that want to plan for the city's future while bypassing elected government. He bemoaned the "spiritual disinvestment" of the Catholic Archdiocese closing many of its churches and social services within the city. The role that predatory loans and foreclosure played has not even been addressed by the restructuring plan. The organization which Wylie-Kellerman supports, Detroiters Resisting Emergency Management, unveiled their own People's Plan for restructuring. It involves charging the banks for their role in the city's destruction.

Wylie-Kellerman and others at Detroiters Resisting Emergency Management intend to continue their prophetic witness, defending the rights of Detroiters to determine their own destiny. Ω

Do As We Say Not As We Do

"It is not appropriate to invade a country and dictate, at the end of a barrel of a gun, what you are trying to achieve."

US Secretary of State John Kerry

March 4, 2014, regarding Russia's intervention in Ukraine

US Military Interventions

Mexico- 1846-48, 1914-18, 1923
Argentina- 1890 **Chile**- 1891, 1973
Haiti- 1891, 1914-34, 1994, 2004-05
Hawaii- 1893
Nicaragua- 1894, 1896, 1898, 1899, 1907, 1912-33, 1981-90
China- 1894-95, 1898-1900, 1922-34
Korea- 1894-96, 1904-05, 1951-
Panama- 1895, 1901-14, 1918-20, 1925, 1958, 1964, 1989-
Philippines- 1898-1910, 1948-534
Cuba- 1898-1902, 1906-09, 1912, 1917-33, 1961, 1962
Puerto Rico- 1898
Guam- 1898-
Samoa- 1899
Honduras- 1903, 1907, 1912, 1919, 1924-25
Dominican Republic- 1903-04, 1914, 1916-24, 1965-66
Russia- 1918-22
Yugoslavia- 1919, 1992-94, 1999

Guatemala- 1920, 1954, 1966-67
Turkey- 1922
El Salvador- 1932, 1981-92
Iran- 1946, 1953, 1980, 1988-87
Uruguay- 1947
Greece- 1947-49 **Egypt**- 1956
Lebanon- 1958, 1982-84
Vietnam- 1960-75
Laos- 1962, 1971-73
Iraq- 1963, 1990-2012
Indonesia- 1965
Cambodia- 1969-75
Oman- 1970
Angola- 1976-92
Grenada- 1983-84
Libya- 1986 **Bolivia**- 1986
Virgin Islands- 1989
Kuwait- 1991
Somalia- 1992-94, 2006-
Bosnia- 1993
Zaire (Congo)- 1996-97
Sudan- 1998
Afghanistan- 1998, 2001-
Macedonia- 2001
Yemen- 2002, 2009-
Colombia- 2003- **Liberia**- 2003
Pakistan- 2005- **Libya**- 2011

My Father

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

My father died on Thursday,
my sister told me so,
he was five and eighty,
although he'd never know.

His memory was shot,
his focus in and out,
his diet bland and mushy,
his happiness in doubt.

No more beer or whiskey,
no cigars or spicey food,
just sleep and plenty of it,
to satisfy his mood.

My youngest did not know him
when he was at his best,
when nothing could constrain him,
when he gave us all no rest.

Some days he'd take us driving
to God knows anywhere,
with seldom any warning,
and very little care.

He took us to the West Coast,
to Canada and the beach,
to New York and to DC,
as far as he could reach.

Other times he'd greet us
with toys beyond belief,
or animals exotic,
to our mother's grief.

He wore a green felt derby,
a Stetson, proud with brim,
an orange hunting cap,
depending on his whim.

His grin was full of mischief,
his keen eyes sparkled bright,
he was by no means perfect,
but gave us all delight...

in life and of its promise
to be what we would be,
for this we're deeply grateful
and trust his soul is free. Ω

Letters

Dear Scott & Claire,
...I visit Memorial Hospital with my helper dog Dain as a volunteer with pastoral care. Yesterday, I visited with four men. One is married and expects to be diagnosed with lung cancer today. The other three are single, live alone, and have alcohol addiction issues. One of the three has been in a hospital or rehab center for four months following a serious accident. I was struck again by people's profound isolation and loneliness. I'm so glad you can be a bright spot of warmth and community for the folks who find their way to you. I hope that when they leave they carry a lively memory that it *is* possible to be part of a supportive, loving group. Pockets of beloved community *do* exist. Oases in the loneliness....

Barbara Laborde
Oakham, Massachusetts

Hi Scott,
Dr. Seuss' Yertle the Turtle story is one of my favorites. Thanks for featuring it and the sneetches in the most recent *Radical*. Both stories should play a featured role in schools everywhere.

I've never been able to understand the mentality that supports the barbaric cruelty of female genital mutilation. May the efforts of Sister Fa and all those working to end FGM bear fruit this year!

Kudos to Bill Wylie-Kellerman for his "100 Suggestions." They're a great blend of thought-provoking and smile-inducing guidelines.

Paul and Katja Rehm
Greenville, New York

Dear Scott,
I found food for thought in your essay "The Folly of Domination." As I see it, part of the problem of religious domination and exclusivity comes from the evil of snobbery. It seems that humans have always sought a means of trying to elevate themselves above their fellow human beings. Religious snobbery is an especially pernicious form of pride's ugly twin brother, for the "put down" of others, and the simultaneous boosting of our own egos, seemingly emanate from God Himself. It's a very appealing, warm and fuzzy notion that I and my crowd are really better, holier, more lovable people than those _____ (fill in the blank)!

I believe that it was C.S. Lewis who said that pride is spiritual cancer. We will never overcome our need to dominate others until we see ourselves as creatures who have received every talent, skill, possession, or positive attribute as a gift from God, and therefore have no reason to look down on or gloat over others. After all, it takes all the "fun" out of boasting if you believe that one's particular talent is not really yours, but God's!

I like your line, in your letter to me, about "trying to be holy and praying that we come close."

...I feel like I'm much closer to the personalist philosophy of the Catholic Worker today than when I first read about the movement some thirty years ago. I'm convinced that our society and our economy are in desperate need of a rebuilding, not a "recovery." I also see the great wisdom of Peter Maurin's *Easy Essays*.

Joe Campanello
Mansfield, Massachusetts

Dear Catholic Workers,
I asked a friend in prison to explain the circumstances around his incarceration. The excerpts that follow are from several recently received letters:

My name is John Robert Ashby. I am a forty-two-year-old Afro-American man, incarcerated in the state of Maryland since I was seventeen. I was convicted of murder, given a life sentence with parole. However, in this state the governors have not signed parole papers in over 30 years.

I have been diligently fighting to raise awareness of my plight and those of other offenders who were juveniles at the time of their arrests and who are actually serving life without parole. I believe that no child, sentenced at the ages of 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, should spend their entire existence behind walls and fences. My sentencing judge said he believed I should see the world again, because he believed I am not a monster or menace to society.

I was a runaway at the age of eleven, and lived on the streets on and off, until seventeen. I went in and out of juvenile facilities, for very small-time drug dealing. I was charged with murder and implicated by someone who did the crime.... My attorney knew very well that I had nothing to do with this murder. My attorney, who's now a judge, knows the truth. I have spent over twenty years in prison for a murder I did not commit....

My case is now under review, but like all supposed reviews, it's just glanced at and thrown to the side, and you receive a typed letter saying your case was reviewed and you should keep the sentence you have. When someone doesn't have money for a prominent attorney, one is practically doomed, and being an Afro-American, one is just warehoused for life. Putting children of minorities behind bars for life has become accepted in this country.

John Robert is inclined to Buddhism and was studying it when our correspondence began. Hence, our correspondence has concentrated on ancient spiritual truths: forgiveness, compassion for all, no matter who they are or what they have done. In John Robert's case, spiritual life training has been a sojourn in hell, which he has survived admirably.

I suspect that if he is given parole, John Robert may do much good helping others like himself who commenced life with a deadly childhood and as teenagers ended up in prison for life.

John Robert needs money for a lawyer or one who works *pro bono*. He needs friends on the outside who can help him to freedom.

He can be reached at:
John Robert Ashley (209606)
North Branch
14100 McMullen Hwy. SW
Cumberland, MD 21502

Joan Thomas
Phoenix, Arizona

Dear Scott ,
I really appreciated your printing my letter. Now my friend Oui gets loving, kind, and educational correspondence from several people. He shared a couple of letters with me and I was thrilled that he now has healthy communication from outside. He is so young, still so innocent for someone already in prison for a over a decade.

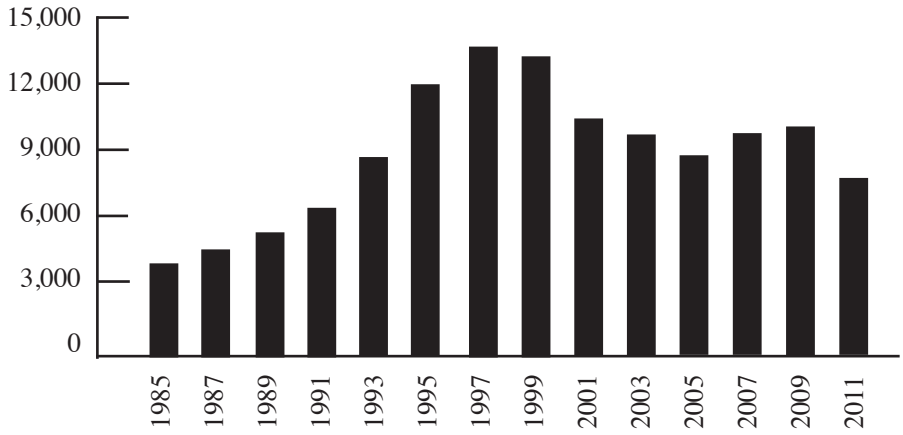
As I took interest in Oui, I started seeing others, who were convicted as adults, doing decades for something they were involved in as a juvenile, when they were not mature or fully developed.

I've tried to find people working with changing the laws on juveniles, but Miami ACLU doesn't respond and no response from others. This is an area that needs more exposure. It's very sad what some of these guys must go through. It's beyond me how Oui has stayed so innocent after what he's been through.

F. Scott Perkins
Zephryhills Correctional Facility
Zephyrhills, Florida

Editor's Note: Some of the organizations dedicated to stop sentencing juveniles as adults are: The Sentencing Project, the Equal Justice Initiative, The Children's Defense Fund, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International.

American Children Jailed with Adults



Catholic Worker Calendar

Wednesday, April 9 — *Five Broken Cameras*: Please come see the 2013 Academy Award-nominated film by Emad Burnat on the nonviolent resistance to the Israeli wall in the Palestinian village of B'lin. 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments and discussion to follow.

Friday, April 18 — Stations of the Cross: Please join us as we process through the city reflecting of Christ's suffering today. Meet at noon, 52 Mason Street, followed by soup and bread.

Monday, April 21 — The Boston Marathon: Please say a prayer for a peaceful race as Claire and Scott run 26.2 miles in shirts proclaiming: *"The only solution is love,"* Dorothy Day.

Wednesday, April 23 , May 14 & — Evening Prayer or Mass: Please join us in prayer and song. 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

Wednesday, May 7 — From Athens to Istanbul: Come see slide presentation by Grace Duffy and Anthony Sliwoski on their March trip to Greece and Turkey. 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

Mason Street Musings

The Gospels relate the story of Jesus healing a group of lepers, only one returned to Him to say thanks. "Where are all the others, weren't there more of you?" Jesus asked. Ironically, Saints Francis and Thérèse House experiences much of the same from those we help. Perhaps it is ingratitude, or perhaps just the excitement of moving on to the next phase of living. One day, Claire and I were commiserating about it. Ten minutes into our dirge, there was a knock on the door. A woman was standing there, late thirties, early forties, and I could tell by the quizzical look on Claire's face that she didn't recognize her. Someone else in need?

The woman said she lived close by, and that she had often thought of stopping by. Suddenly while on the way home, she did. It turns out that she just wanted to stop and say thanks. Scott and Claire had taken her in for only one night well over a year ago. She had suffered abuse at the hand of her spouse, lost her job, and was about to commit suicide that day, but a social worker referred her to Saints Francis and Thérèse House. She wanted Claire to know she was all right, that she was free from her abusive husband, and had obtained a great paying job, and an apartment nearby. Then she was gone.

So much for our lament! The serendipity of God trumped our hand of misery. Occasionally, one among the many returns just to say thanks. Jesus said we should give expecting nothing in return, even if the return is a simple word of gratitude, I suppose. Even so, it is nice to hear it every now and then, and God knows this, as He showed us that day.

So these poor ones come and go, and

Tom Lewis

they are legion: men and women, young and old, sick and healthy, honest and dishonest, most with no plan, few options, and little support. Recently a young man arrived seeking a second chance in rehab for alcoholism, the result of a wasted youth seeking the thrill of Rave events; then an out-of-work carpenter with a high degree of southern charm and an accent to match, who tricked and talked his way into an extended visit, and a car repair at our expense; and a young lady with multiple personality disorder, no financial discipline, dim prospects, and an ineffective social worker. These and so many more have come our way. Most seem appreciative.

It seems that I too am also on my way out, but with a wellspring of thanks and appreciation to Scott and Claire. A Buddhist monk, and brother of a Vietnamese couple I taught English to and assisted in their citizenship studies, fell from a ladder in December of 2012. He broke his neck, and is now a quadriplegic needing 24/7 care. The family asked if I would be his caregiver. I have great trepidation, not so much about him, but for myself, my time, my energy, my life. I gave the same kind of care to my dear grandmother for five years before she passed. I swore I would never, never, do that kind of care again. Yet, here I am feeling compelled because the situation is such that I know that I am the only one at this time who can give him what he needs.

Ultimately, I think I fear what we all fear, not being acknowledged, not receiving a simple thank you, not feeling truly appreciated. But then there is always the possibility of serendipity.

Thanks to you, Claire and Scott. Thank you, Catholic Workers and supporters for making the work of God possible. Ω

Robert

SS. Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker
52 Mason Street
Worcester, MA 01610
(508) 753-3588 & (508) 753-3089

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